

22. WE PREPARE FOR GOD'S BANQUET

What do we do when we are invited to dinner at someone's home? Usually, if it is a very special dinner, we wash ourselves very clean, put on nice new clothes, and prepare to get an early start so that we can be there right on time! We really look forward to such a dinner or party because we know that it will certainly be a joyous occasion, one that we probably will not forget for a long time.

When we come to the banquet of Jesus Christ, we have to make a special preparation also. We say together the Lord's Prayer and the priest says several other prayers. These prayers remind us how our hearts and minds are to be prepared as we approach the Table of our Lord.

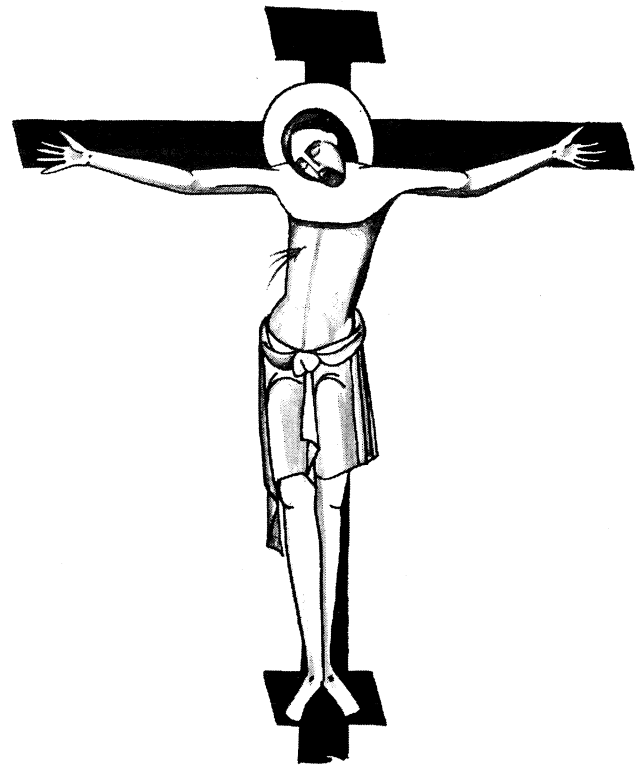
The priest first says a litany which ends with the words:

*"Having asked for the unity of the Faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, **Let us commend ourselves and each other, and all of our life unto Christ our God.**"*

The first thing that we must do before we can receive the food of God's Kingdom is to give ourselves completely to God's Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus gave Himself completely to God His Father. He obeyed Him in every way — even in dying for us in order to save us. When Jesus was on the Cross, His last words showed how He gave Himself to His Father:

"Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!' And having said this he breathed His last." (Luke 23:46)

Only Jesus Christ can call God "Father."
Only if we truly love and obey God, as



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brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, can we dare to call God "**Our Father.**"

The priest says the first prayer, which says that we give our whole life and hope to God. He says:

*"Make us worthy to partake of the heavenly Mysteries of this spiritual table.
With a pure conscience
For remission of sins
For forgiveness of transgressions
For communion of the Holy Spirit
For the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven
For boldness towards Thee
But not for judgment or condemnation."*

And make us worthy, O Master, that with boldness and without condemnation We may dare to call on Thee, the heavenly God, as Father, and to say:

Now we join the priest saying:

*Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread:
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

Read the first prayer carefully and then follow these directions:

1. Underline the words that ask God to allow us to come to His Banquet in the Kingdom.
2. Underline the words that ask that this communion will bring us into God's Kingdom.
3. Put an X by the sentence where we ask God if we may dare to call Him our Father.

Do you know the prayer to God our Father well enough to fill in the missing words without looking at the prayer?

1. Our Father, _____,
2. Hallowed be Thy Name.
3. Thy _____ come.
4. Thy _____ be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
5. Give us this day our _____ ;
6. And forgive us our trespasses,
As we _____ those who trespass against us;
7. And lead us not into _____ ,
But deliver us from _____ .

Find the Lord's Prayer in your Bibles (Matthew 6:9-13). Now read the following passages from the rest of chapters 6 and 7, and see if you can tell what parts of the Lord's Prayer they might be explaining. Put the numbers of the sentences in the lines by the passages:

Matthew 6:15 _____
Matthew 6:25, 34 _____
Matthew 6:33 _____
Matthew 7:21 _____

The priest gives us God's blessing of peace and asks us to "bow our heads unto the Lord." We bow our heads in obedience and humility before Christ. We know that we have done nothing to make us worthy to come to His Table. But **Jesus invites and commands us to come.**

Once when Jesus was eating with His followers and telling them about the Kingdom, one man said: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!" But Jesus answered him with this story:

A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for all is now ready." But they all alike began to make excuses. . . . So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, "Go quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame."

And the servant said, "Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." And the master said to the servant, "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

(Luke 14:16-24)

Read this story carefully and answer these questions:

1. What happened when the master sent his servant to bring those, who were invited, into his house?

2. Read verses 18-20 in your Bibles. Did the excuses of the men seem like good reasons for not coming to the banquet? _____ Give your reasons why they were or were not.

3. What did the master do when no one came?

4. Why was he anxious to have so many people?

5. Does this story tell you anything about how we should respond to Christ's invitation to receive Holy Communion? Give your explanation here.

The priest now lifts up the bread that is the Body of Christ. He says in a loud voice.

"Holy things are for the holy!"

And we answer that **one person only is Holy**; He is the **Lord Jesus Christ**. This is the call for the people to come and receive the Holy Gifts.

The priest receives Holy Communion, and any other priests or deacons who are present. During this time, we sing a hymn of praise to God. When all the celebrants have communicated, the priest prepares the Holy Gifts for the people. Now, he comes to us and calls us to the Table of the Lord, saying:

"In the fear of God, and with faith and love, draw near!"

Jesus Christ now invites us to eat and drink with Him at His Table in the Kingdom. We come in a joyful procession to receive the new life of Jesus, the life that shall have no end. As we draw near we sing:

"Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!

God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us!"

In the fear of God, and with faith and love, draw near !

